

# JEFFERSON JOURNAL

November/December 2020



## After The Almeda Fire



The Members' Magazine of Jefferson Public Radio

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November/December 2020

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By Juliet Grable

Photos by Christopher Briscoe

For the Rogue Valley, September 8, 2020 will be remembered as the day everything changed. The conditions were unnerving: warm temperatures; vegetation dried from drought; and an unusually strong easterly wind that made it hard to sleep the night before. All that was needed was a spark. It came at 11:00 am, in a field adjacent a north Ashland neighborhood. What started as a grass fire quickly blew up into a suburban conflagration that darkened skies all day and cast a hellish glow on the horizon all night. The Almeda fire spread from house to house, neighborhood to neighborhood, town to town, destroying entire sections of Talent and Phoenix.



Teams of volunteers from Samaritan's Purse do the painstaking and hazardous work of sifting through the debris of burned homes.

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**COVER:** Many long-time businesses in Phoenix and Talent were leveled by the Almeda Fire. Rebuilding will likely take years.

CREDIT: CHRISTOPHER BRISCOE

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If things were as bad as we feared, we expected officials would activate the Emergency Alert System.

# Ruts On The Information Highway

**S**ometimes it feels like 2020 is simply a doomed year.

We started off with a global pandemic that's threatened our health, devastated our economy and upended virtually every aspect of our lives.

Then, in September, wildfires tore through a number of communities in our region, destroying nearly 3,000 homes and businesses and displacing thousands of families. Several members of our staff were evacuated for extended periods of time, but fortunately, none of them lost their homes.

As if that weren't enough, last month one of our reporters covering the dismantling of a homeless camp in Medford's Hawthorne Park was arrested for attempting to report on interactions between Medford Police and campers in the park.

These last two events raise broader issues for our organization, our listeners and our community.

## The Almeda Fire

The Almeda Fire started in an Ashland neighborhood and was fanned by unusually high summer winds. Within the blink of an eye, the fire shot up the I-5 corridor and the Bear Creek Greenway destroying large swaths of the towns of Talent and Phoenix. One Jackson County Sheriff's Deputy evacuating residents told me that winds moved the fire so quickly that evacuation routes changed within minutes and some people found themselves evacuating directly into the path of new fires. During the first few hours after the fire started, our news department persistently tried to reach public safety agencies so that we could provide information to our listeners. It turned out to be impossible to reach anyone who could give us that information. If things were as bad as we feared, we expected officials would activate the Emergency Alert System (EAS), a system that allows emergency managers to interrupt our signals immediately and use them to convey essential life-saving information to the public. We test this system frequently, as do all other broadcasters, to make sure it functions when it's needed. But no public safety official ever activated this system. The day that followed the fire, we found numerous voicemail messages from listeners desperately seeking information during the previous evening about whether they should evacuate and if so, where they should go to stay safe. Many of these messages shared a common theme: "We don't have cell phone service or access to the Internet and we don't know what to do ... we're listening to JPR for information but don't hear anything ... please help us!" Some of these messages were heart-wrenching. Exactly why Jackson County emergency managers did not activate the EAS remains unclear. Perhaps they were relying too heavily on the opt-in emergency notification system that delivers text mes-

sages to cell phones. After the fire, Jackson County Sheriff Nate Sickler made a statement indicating that he believed if an EAS alert was broadcast people would have evacuated all at once clogging roads and hampering the evacuation effort. While it's easy to second guess these kinds of decisions, it's hard to believe that a calm, fact-based message conveying who should, and equally important, who should not evacuate, would have made the situation worse. We hope a comprehensive post-incident analysis of the emergency response to the Almeda Fire by public safety agencies will be conducted and that it will include the input of broadcasters which continue to provide a critical link to citizens during public emergencies. Here at JPR, we are also engaged in an internal evaluation of our own monitoring systems, technical infrastructure and operating protocols so that we can take steps to improve our response to future public emergencies in partnership with public safety agencies.

## JPR Reporter Arrested

On September 22nd, JPR reporter April Ehrlich was arrested by the Medford Police Department as she attempted to cover the removal of homeless campers from Medford's Hawthorne Park. The department was acting under an ordinance that allows public facilities to be temporarily closed for maintenance and to provide "sanitation, cleaning, and inspection of City property" according to a spokesman. But the action was not only about sanitation, it was about evicting unhoused people from the park and April was there to observe and report on how that was being done. Medford Police directed April to a "media staging area" where it was not possible to adequately see or hear interactions between police officers and campers, or gather audio. April continued to do her work and was arrested for second-degree criminal trespassing, interfering with a peace officer and resisting arrest. After spending a long day in the Jackson County Jail, April was released on bail later that afternoon. While I would never have asked April, or any of our reporters, to take such a stand to defend her First Amendment rights as a journalist, I'm proud of the resolve and courage she exhibited to do her job on behalf of citizens. In condemning April's arrest, the Oregon Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists wrote: "Requiring journalists to work from a government-approved staging area where they are unable to observe police actions or talk to people in a public park falls far short of the right of press freedom enshrined in the First Amendment. Journalists should not face arrest for simply doing their jobs, which include observing the conduct of public officials and law enforcement officers in public places and reporting those actions to the communities they serve." I agree.

Continued on page 18



# After The Almeda Fire

**By Juliet Grable  
Photos by Christopher Briscoe**



**ABOVE:** The Almeda Fire destroyed dozens of familiar and beloved businesses and restaurants along Highway 99.

**FOLLOWING PAGE:** Thousands of Rogue Valley residents face the prospect of starting over in a housing market that was already tight before the fire.



**"Our decisions [about] what to take will forever haunt us. The 'Why didn't we grab this or that?' will be a subject of many bouts of tears, sadness, anger and depression. 'We lost EVERYTHING!' will play itself over and over forever."**

*Dana Goulston, Talent*

## **F**or the Rogue Valley, September 8, 2020 will be remembered as the day everything changed.

The conditions were unnerving: warm temperatures; vegetation dried from drought; and an unusually strong easterly wind that made it hard to sleep the night before. All that was needed was a spark.

It came at 11:00 am, in a field adjacent a north Ashland neighborhood. What started as a grass fire quickly blew up into a suburban conflagration that darkened skies all day and cast a hellish glow on the horizon all night. The Almeda fire spread from house to house, neighborhood to neighborhood, town to town, destroying entire sections of Talent and Phoenix.

For hours, firefighters and law enforcement officers fought not only the fire, but time, in a frantic, heroic effort to get people out of harm's way. Neighbors helped neighbors evacuate; some defied orders and stayed to try to save their homes. There were harrowing stories of narrow escapes, traffic jams, and panicked calls to family and friends.

"We had no clue where the fire was or where it was going," says Christa Rodriguez, recalling a hair-raising evacuation from Talent with her fiancé. "Seeing all the first responders and law enforcement officers, I kept thinking over and over, they're trying to prevent another Paradise."

The Almeda Fire created an instant housing crisis, a collective trauma, and left the community fabric in shreds. Thousands of people are navigating the landscape of loss.

There are the grim tallies: 2,350 homes and nearly 200 commercial buildings, lost. Over a dozen mobile home parks and entire senior housing villages, gone. In Phoenix, three out of four kids were instantly homeless, along with many of their teachers.

Those are the statistics. But it's the drive along Interstate 5 and Highway 99 that makes your throat tighten; the images and videos on social media that grip your gut, the raw accounts from friends-neighbors-strangers that bring you to tears and make you feel proud of your community in a way you never thought possible.

Now, over a month later, the clean-up has begun. Burned out vehicles are being hauled away and crushed. Residents have returned to the places where they slept, gardened, and played with their friends to recover bits of their former lives and to leave bowls of food and water for their cats, hoping that by some miracle they might still be alive.

Others have left the valley altogether, to stay with friends, family, or whomever will have them. Many will not return.

Although the acrid odor of charred homes, vehicles, and trees still lingers, the first rains have come. The skies are blue; there's a chill in the air.

But those of us who live in and near the Rogue Valley know



Residents of the impacted communities have expressed a strong desire to rebuild in a way that preserves their diversity.

we will never be the same. There will be before the Almeda Fire, and after. How we rebuild will be up to all of us.

*Talent Strong*

*Unidos y fuertes*

*A Phoenix, rising from the ashes.*

For hundreds of people, these aren't just pithy slogans, but words to live by as they devote their days to helping our communities recover. We know there are many stories that won't be told; too many heroes will remain unsung. We also recognize that there were other devastating fires that horrible week, including the South Obenchain Fire in northeastern Jackson County, which destroyed over 30 homes. We wish we could tell all of your stories. But we hope that by highlighting these few, along with some of the efforts to help and heal, we honor the many, and inspire more people to be part of a stronger, more resilient After.



The region's fire agencies were impacted, too. Jackson County Fire District 5 lost its Phoenix fire station to the fire.



Elib Crist-Dwyer is helping match ShiftPods with families in need of short-term housing. Designed to be rapidly deployed, the units come equipped with inflatable mattresses, bedding, and towels.

# Desperately Seeking Shelter

Shortly before noon on September 8, Jocksana Corona spotted thick dark smoke billowing up from behind the trees south of her home at Talent Mobile Estates. While she waited for her husband, Carlos, to come and get them, she and their two children went door to door, warning neighbors to leave. Twelve-year-old Abby filled a kiddie pool with water for the cats they couldn't find.

The Coronas' mobile home burned, along with nearly all of the park's 100 units. Now, the family is staying at the Girl Scout Center in Medford, along with Carlos's mother and sister, who also lost their home to the fire, and their many animals. They were hoping to use their insurance check as a down payment on a new home, but there's nothing available.

Still, "we were lucky," says Jocksana. "Probably 95 percent of the mobile homes weren't insured." In a region already straining from a severe lack of affordable housing, the Almeda Fire has scaled up the crisis tenfold. "Housing has always been a privilege here," says Jocksana, adding that most of the park's residents were Latinx. "Now it's even more so."

People are scrambling to find housing before winter. Households are doubling and tripling up, applying for FEMA disaster relief, taking motel vouchers from the Red Cross. But for families with undocumented members, federal and state resources aren't an option, says Niria Alicia, a community organizer who



Many of the displaced are having trouble finding affordable housing, or any housing at all.

**BELOW:** Jocksana and Carlos Corona and their children, Abby and Nathan, stand in front of the remains of their home at Talent Mobile Estates, where they lived for 17 years.

cofounded the Almeda Fires Latinx Relief Fund. For them, help comes “person to person.”

Niria’s fund is helping Latinx families with everything from housing and medical bills to gas and clothing. There are many ways to help, she says. Take your home off the market and offer it to a displaced family for six months or a year. Lend an extra RV, trailer, Fifth Wheel, or spare vehicle, or donate cash, so people can buy these things themselves.

Niria believes we have the resources. “It’s a matter of opening our hearts and our pocketbooks,” she says.

Elib Crist-Dwyer, who has been a scenic carpenter for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF) for 14 years, is heading up one effort to provide short-term housing to displaced families.

Under his direction, the vast OSF building in Talent is serving as a hub for 50 “ShiftPods,” insulated dome tents that measure 100 square feet. The first 10 units were donated by the company’s founder, who used them in his Burning Man camp. Forty more were purchased at a deep discount through a fund managed by Rogue Climate and Rogue Action Center.

The logistics around setting up a ShiftPod camp in the time of COVID proved too daunting, so Crist-Dwyer is asking families to host one in their back yard.

The host family must provide access to a bathroom (and preferably a kitchen), and everyone must follow COVID proto-



cols. So far, Crist-Dwyer has placed nine pods. Nine of the remaining are larger models accessible by wheelchair.

“We’re really concentrating on helping the most vulnerable families,” he says. “It’s not a permanent solution, or one that will even get a family through winter. But it will help them now.”



# Confronting the Ashes



Minutes before learning about the fire, Anna Braje took a picture of her newborn daughter, Lucille. She planned to send it to her husband Ian at 11:57 am, exactly three weeks after Lucille's birth. She never got the chance.

TOP: Teams of volunteers from Samaritan's Purse do the painstaking and hazardous work of sifting through the debris of burned homes.

**A**nna Braje does not like to ask for help. But with a baby less than a month old, her husband working at the coast, and almost everything she owned burned in the Almeda Fire, she didn't have a choice.

Braje's aunt set up a fundraiser for the family. Another relative took them in. Now she needed help sifting through the ashes of the home she and her husband Ian rented at Bear Creek Mobile Home Park. Braje was hoping to find her wedding ring, which her husband designed, and perhaps, the remains of one of her cats, Joey.

When Braje evacuated, she grabbed the journals her father had written for her, a basket of laundry, and her baby, Lucille. The exit was blocked by emergency vehicles. As she drove over the median, she saw the first few units near the entrance on fire.

"I knew there was no going back at that point," says Braje, recalling the heat, the wind, the smell. "The only word I can think to describe it is apocalyptic."

After enduring the trauma of fleeing a fast-moving fire, thousands of people have had to confront visiting what remains of their homes and neighborhoods. Braje asked Samaritan's Purse to sift her homesite. This nonprofit Christian organization, which deploys to disasters all over the world, has received 560 orders to sift debris, and they hope to get to all of them before FEMA begins their clean-up. Although their stated pur-

pose for this mission is to help people recover physical objects from the fire, they are also there to listen and provide emotional support as people confront the enormity of their losses.

Before going to work, the team of volunteers gathered in a circle with Braje. One by one they introduced themselves. They came from Texas, Florida, Kentucky, and The Dalles; a couple from Colorado served as chaplains. "Let us carry you for a while," said Grant Bous- tead, one of the team leaders. Then they prayed.

The actual work is painstaking, tedious, almost peaceful. Volunteers scrape through larger debris with garden tools and filter finer bits through sifting boxes, hoping to spy a glint of jewelry or silverware.

Other groups, including Helping Hands International, are helping people sift through the debris of their former homes, and many people are doing this somber work on their own. Sometimes these searches yield unexpected treasures. Robbie Dunlop, who lost her home at Mountain View Estates, found her grandmother's spoon and an angel figurine—objects which, having endured a trial by fire, are infused with new significance.



A volunteer from Samaritan's Purse comforts Janice Lynne, who lost her home at Mountain View Estates.

**"We grew up in the Valley. We were Cubs; we were Grizzlies. While we've lost everything, it makes you realize that you have everything. We have each other, our parents are close by; we have this community, which is amazing. The love and support is overwhelming."**

*Anna Braje*



**"No matter what Grandma cooked, she used that spoon. She said [that's] what made it taste so good. As long as you had the spoon, you could cook anything. I've had this little angel for 30 years. I was having a real difficult time in my life. I looked down on the ground and this angel was just laying there. I took it as a sign that everything was going to be alright."**

*Robbie Dunlop*

One of the first things Robbie Dunlop found in the rubble of her mobile home was her grandmother's cooking spoon.



Robbie Dunlop

# Firecats

Last night a friend of mine (who wants to learn rescue) and I ventured into three different, devastated mobile home parks, searching for cats the owners so desperately miss.

We spotted many cats! And will be returning tonight with equipment to trap and get reunited, vet care, etc.

As the ash settles, the smoke clears, and people begin returning to what was once their homes, my hope is they will be reunited with their purr babies.

Adrienne with the Cats GoFundMe update

As the Almeda fire tore through the valley, many had only enough time to gather what they could and flee. Many people couldn't find their cats, or weren't home when the fire hit.

"I went in the next day," says Adrienne Reynolds, who was worried about the feral cat colony she looked after at Totem Pole Trailer Park in Talent. "I wasn't supposed to, but I did."

Soon, Reynolds was flooded with messages from people asking if she could help search for their beloved animals.

After losing everything to the fire, a missing pet is heartbreak upon heartbreak. Although many perished in the fire, others—filthy, scared, hungry, some injured—went into hiding. A loose network of volunteers sprang up to help find, feed, and treat the victims, reunite them with their people, and find foster homes.

Jane "Rabbitt" Babbitt, a longtime Friends of the Animal Shelter volunteer, is among those making daily circuits to burned-out mobile home parks, putting out food, checking trail cams, listening, and watching. "It's all so overwhelming—it was, even before the fire, with COVID and the political situation," she says. "I'm just keeping my head down and going to feeding stations and looking for cats."

While Reynolds mostly works alone, other rescuers, including a group of women who call themselves A.R.F.—Animal Rescue Force—collaborate. All rescuers post and share pictures and descriptions on a confusing array of Facebook pages.

Helping animals is a simple expression of compassion, with no messy strings attached. Hundreds have donated supplies and money to rescuers and vital organizations. The Jackson County Animal Shelter, which had to evacuate their building in Phoenix, set up shop at the Jackson County Expo Center and acted as a hub for lost and found animals. Southern Oregon Veterinary Specialty Center treated burned animals at no charge until their owners were found.

Shannon Jay, who has spent over 2000 hours on the ground rescuing cats in burn zones, arrived from California to teach the finer points of "firecat" rescue. Along with useful tips—*Use the juice from the mackerel to soak cut up rags to hang above the food areas; KFC original recipe chicken is kitty crack—he*



Every day, volunteers restock feeding stations in burned-out neighborhoods in Medford, Phoenix, Talent, and Ashland.

TOP: Adrienne Reynolds with "99," one of the cats from a feral colony at Totem Pole Trailer Park in Talent. Although Reynolds usually releases feral cats after having them sterilized, she is keeping this one.

brought vital equipment, including a thermal imaging scope, to help locate scared and injured cats that had crawled into impossible nooks and cracks. Jay helped Reynolds on a nail-biting rescue on Highway 99, where they raised a burned-out vehicle with a floor jack and plucked the cat to safety.

Reynolds has captured, sterilized, and relocated several cats from the Totem Pole colony. One, which she named "99," has become the poster cat for feline burn victims. When first captured, the skin on his nose, paws and legs had completely burned off. A month later, short fuzz is starting to conceal the tender pink skin.

Burned kitty 99 played for the first time last night!

And we trapped 3 cats yesterday!!! 2 were reunited with their owners, and my heart is BRIMMING!

Adrienne with the Cats GoFundMe update

# Rethinking Bear Creek

**B**ear Creek is a connector, linking human communities from Ashland to Central Point and connecting the mountains to the Rogue River. Despite its poor water quality, it's a conduit for life: water and young fish flow downstream, while adult Coho and Chinook return to the creek to spawn. The corridor was also a haven for birds, squirrels, beavers, for the people who recreated there, and for some who made the greenway their home, buffered from view by a thicket of non-native Himalayan blackberries.

Since 2008, hundreds of kids from Helman Elementary had helped plant mock orange, currant, and other natives around Ashland Pond, close to the origin of the fire. On the morning of September 8, what took hours to plant and years to grow was erased in minutes.

Bear Creek became a corridor of destruction. The fire roared up the drainage, burning vegetation, charring trees, and no doubt incinerating hundreds of animals that will never be accounted for.

The fire laid bare the banks of Bear Creek, and with it some of our communities' most challenging issues: houselessness, lack of mental health resources and affordable housing, and deferred environmental restoration.

But this blackened blank slate also offers an opportunity, says Robyn Janssen of Rogue Riverkeeper.

"The riparian area had a lot of non-natives, and the fire took all of that out," she says. "In that sense, it's kind of great. Those problem plants are gone."

Rogue Riverkeeper is working with several agencies, organi-

zations, and municipalities to make sure Bear Creek is protected in the short term and restored thoughtfully in the long term. "It's a refocused effort, putting some attention and love in there as opposed to ignoring it and pretending like it's not there, which unfortunately has been the case for many years," says Janssen.

After the fire, the drought dragged on; reservoirs drained to record lows. But rain, so needed, so anticipated, is also a problem. Thousands of burned structures, vehicles, and their contents have been reduced to fine ash. A heavy rain could bear this toxic sludge into the storm drains that feed into Bear Creek. The newly exposed banks, unprotected by vegetation, could funnel rivers of sediment into the water, where it can clog fish gills and smother eggs.

Jackson County Parks plans to drop thousands of pounds of native seed onto the bare banks before the rains come. Crews from Rogue Valley Sewer Services are racing to cap the waste lines under destroyed homes and install fabric filters in storm drains.

The fish don't know, or care. What they know is an ancient instinct that tells them to swim upstream. By mid-October, the first Chinook had made their way up Bear Creek as far as Talent—thrilling shapes that seem at first like shadows, for those who take the time to look.

**BELOW:** Mitigating pollution from the fires is the immediate concern for Bear Creek. Keeping invasive plants like blackberries at bay will be an ongoing challenge.

**"The greenway is a remnant haven for wildlife, the thin blue and green line through Bear Creek Valley. I am very concerned that most of the mature big trees, the cottonwoods, are toast and that the response from our traumatized community will be to cut them all down. Our bird neighbors need large living and dead trees with cavities. I've been thinking about shifting baselines a lot, heart-broken especially about further loss of streamside and bottomland forests. Our upland forests and woodlands are more resilient to wildfire, but climate change, extreme fire weather, and 100 years of active fire suppression are changing the game."**

*Kristi Mergenthaler, local botanist*





Through Rogue Food Unites, area restaurants, many of which were struggling under COVID restrictions, are making breakfast, lunch, and dinner for displaced residents.

## Essentials



Hannah Sohl, Laura Quintero, and Pauline Black stand in front of the Talent mutual aid site. Over 100 people a day stop by to get food, supplies, and clothing.

**"The success of the community at large is in so many ways based upon the success of hospitality and tourism. If those things collapse, there's going to be so much more loss that can't be gained through a reconstruction project."**

*Adam Danforth, Rogue Food Unites*

**K**imberly Wagner was camping near the coast when the Almeda Fire swept through Talent. "A friend texted me and said, the fire's probably going to get your home and it could take out the whole valley," she says.

Wagner stayed in a motel in Brookings that night, but she couldn't sleep. It wasn't until she watched Bow Shaban DeBey's midnight bicycle tour on Facebook that she learned the duplex she rented on Arnos Road was one of thousands of homes destroyed that night. When she returned to the Valley, all she had left was her camping gear and clothes she had taken for her short trip.

Even as the fire still smoldered, organizations like Rogue Climate, Rogue Action Center, and Unete were setting up emergency stations where people like Wagner could access the basics: food, diapers, toiletries, clothing.

Ramiro Padilla, owner of El Tapatio in Ashland, fed evacuees in the parking lot of his restaurant. A group of Phoenix and Talent teachers started distributing supplies out of a truck at the Phoenix Home Depot and later, the Shoppes at Exit 24. Just as immediately, restaurants started providing take-away meals for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

"Right away I realized we're going to need some good food options to support people," says Adam Danforth, a butcher and advocate for sustainable food systems who lives in Ashland. "What better way to intersect the benefit of incoming relief money than directing it at restaurants and farms who can produce that food." He reached out to local restaurateurs Melissa McMillan and Jamie North; together they launched Rogue Food Unites, which pays local restaurants to make up to 3,000 meals a day for displaced residents.

These meals are the good stuff: pulled pork from Sammich; lasagna from Arbor House; burritos from Taqueria Las Reyes. As of this writing, between 30 and 35 area restaurants are participating.

The Red Cross delivers about half the meals to motels that are housing many of the displaced. The rest go to the mutual aid stations or to couriers who take meals to homes and farms, where many seasonal workers are currently staying.

As of October 9, Rogue Food Unites had served over 31,000 meals and injected over a quarter of a million dollars into the local economy. Danforth and his team hope to start working with the Phoenix-Talent School District to supplement their school meal service, which only provides breakfast and lunch on weekdays.

The meals and mutual aid centers will keep going as long as people need them, says Allie Rosenbluth, Campaigns Director at Rogue Climate. Her organization, which lost their Phoenix office to the fire, took over the Phoenix mutual aid site and runs another in Talent with Rogue Action Center. There are also aid stations at Unete and the Living Waters Church in Medford and at OSF's Carpenter Hall in Ashland.

Many volunteers are needed to staff these sites, says Rosenbluth. "This work is really critical to being able to keep families here in this valley while they're in transitional housing."

**"The Almeda Fire was definitely exacerbated by climate change—the hot dry summer, the unseasonable winds are all part of climate chaos. Our communities need to learn to be resilient and support each other during these crises because they're going to keep happening. A critical part of the work for climate justice is to ensure that when these crises happen, we have our community's back."**

*Allie Rosenbluth, Rogue Climate*

Along with distributing vital supplies, the American Red Cross has helped nearly 900 people find emergency housing.



Mutual aid stations, like this one in Phoenix, stock toothbrushes, pet food, and other essentials. People can also charge their phones, use the Wi-Fi, and pick up meals.

**"When I reflect on it, I was really in an altered state as I was going around collecting clothing at the donation sites. Sometimes I look at what I'm wearing and think, I don't even remember where I got that bag of clothing."**

*Kimberly Wagner, Talent*





# Helping and Healing

**H**umans are meaning makers. Almost immediately after the fire, symbols of renewal bloomed amidst the rubble: buckets of sunflowers; a flag planted in ashes; blades of new grass peeking through charred ground.

In Phoenix, an artist named Benjamin Swatez was struck by the beautiful patina on the body a van ravaged by fire. He got out his supplies and began to paint. As he worked, people gathered.

*...countless residents stopped, Swatez wrote in a heartfelt Facebook post. ...some in shock, tears, despair, searching for hope, light at the end of the tunnel, something positive... and [it] was a deep honor to listen to some of their stories and share a painting from my heart.*

The trauma of the fire struck deep. For weeks, many evacuees kept their cars packed, just in case. Anxiety ticked up on windy days. Many describe a bone-deep exhaustion, trouble sleeping, nightmares, despair—and rage.

**“Please do your part to get involved to help others. Because you never think it's going to be YOU, or your neighbors, friends and family. And when it is, there is nothing that can prepare you for the profound sense that nothing will ever be the same.”**

*Mira Brockelman*

**“If you cannot understand why someone is grieving for so long, consider yourself fortunate that you do not understand.”**

*Post shared to Phoenix Oregon Facebook page*

The early stage of recovery is filled with all the stuff you have to do, says Scott Bandoroff, an Ashland therapist who provided impromptu crisis counseling at people's burned-out homesites. Replacing clothes and other belongings, looking for housing, contacting insurance and navigating the FEMA process—all of this busyness staves off the inevitable.

Though heartened by fire victims' resilience, Bandoroff warns that once people take care of their basic survival needs, the grief will strike—and it will likely be overwhelming. Mingling with uncertainty about the future is a longing for what was lost.

*I just want my stuff back*, people told me, while in the same breath expressing gratitude for the generosity of friends, family, strangers. *I want to sleep in my bed, I want the view from my window. I miss my neighbors, my kitty.*

*I want to go home.*

The person who endured the terror of evacuating says, *at least I have my home*. The person who lost a home says, *at least I had insurance*. The person without insurance says, *at least I have my dog*. The person who lost their dog says, *at least I have my life*.

Those of us who didn't lose physical possessions are stuck with a confusing mix of grief and guilt. But the fire ripped great



**"I'm usually the 'getter-doner' in my family, the one providing emotional support. I don't usually need help."**

*Kevin Kushima*

Kevin Kushima, 28, is staying with Ashland therapist Scott Bandoroff while trying to help his mother by raising money through GoFundMe. They lost their mobile home at Bear Creek Estates.



Carlos Corona found his wife Jocksana's wedding ring as he sifted through the debris of their burned mobile home. Later, he found her engagement ring, too.

**RIGHT:** As the magnitude of loss sinks in, it will be even more important to take care of ourselves and support each other.

**PREVIOUS PAGE:** Artist Benjamin Swatez painted this "Phoenix Rising" mural on a Sprinter Van that lived at Rogue Climate's office in Phoenix. The panel is now on display at the mutual aid station in Talent.

holes in the fabric of our communities. We all feel those losses.

"People tend to dishonor their own trauma, says Bandoroff. "It's really important not to do that, and to embrace your own grief."

Helping others can help, suggests Bandoroff, who has taken a fire victim named Kevin Kushima into his home. The creativity and generosity people have shown in the aftermath of the fire begs the question: Why can't it always be this way? And yet, as the initial shock fades, people will inevitably begin turning



**"This is the time to accept support, whether from family or friends or professionals. Accept it, seek it. And be kind to yourself. We're not very good at that as a species."**

*Scott Bandoroff*

their attention elsewhere.

Fire victims are worried. *Please don't forget us*, they write on the Phoenix and Talent Facebook pages, which have become *de facto* support groups. *Please don't leave us behind. Keep donating.*

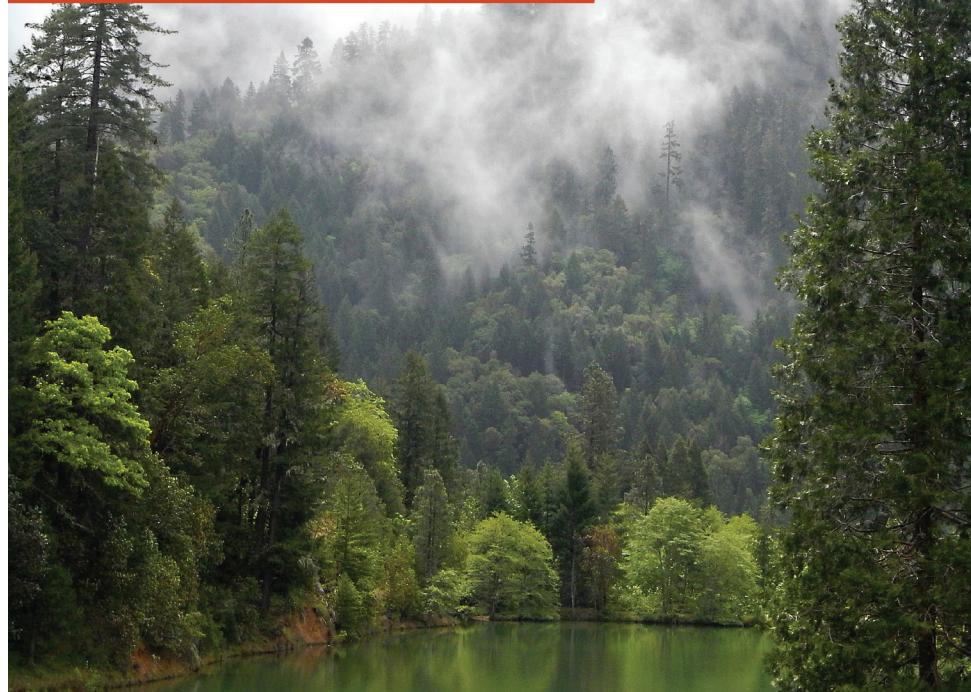
Keep advocating.

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## Tuned In

Continued from page 5

The Medford Police Department made a choice that day. It could have asked its officers to do their best work in the park—to rise to the highest standards of community policing—to treat campers with dignity, respect and professionalism—to direct them to resources to obtain help—and to work constructively and transparently with members of the press to document interactions between police and campers for the public. Instead, it appears the department directed officers to make sure the press didn't "get in the way" and to make an example of any reporter that didn't comply with their orders. How did the police treat campers in Hawthorne Park that day? We don't know because April Ehrlich was in jail, and every other media report I saw came from a staging area where it was impossible to get the real story.

Each week, nearly 100,000 people rely on JPR as a trusted source of information. Getting you that information is not always easy. Yet, despite obstacles, we recognize that accurate, reliable information is a precious resource, both to the safety and well-being of our community and the health of our democracy.



Paul Westhelle is  
JPR's Executive Director.

# Climate Change Set The Conditions For Oregon Fires. Did It Stoke The Flames, Too?

**T**he extreme weather conditions that led into the Labor Day weekend wildfires were unlike anything Oregon's seen before but could become more frequent.

Jay Stockton's desk job is not the kind you do from home during a pandemic. So on the first of a four-day fire weather shift at the National Weather Service in Medford, the senior forecaster went into the office, sat down in front of his five monitors and started watching the satellite and radar data roll in.

"It was evident early on that we had an anomalous event coming up," Stockton said.

It was the Friday going into Labor Day Weekend.

Stockton is used to fall weather patterns in southwest Oregon that create east winds. There's even a name for what happens: "the Chetco Effect." If the wind direction is just right, cool air drops down into the Chetco Canyon, warming as it descends toward the ocean. The winds pick up speed as they funnel down the canyon. Then they hit the coastal town of Brookings with a wall of hot, dry air.

"When you get the wind combined with very low humidity, that is a bad combination," he said.

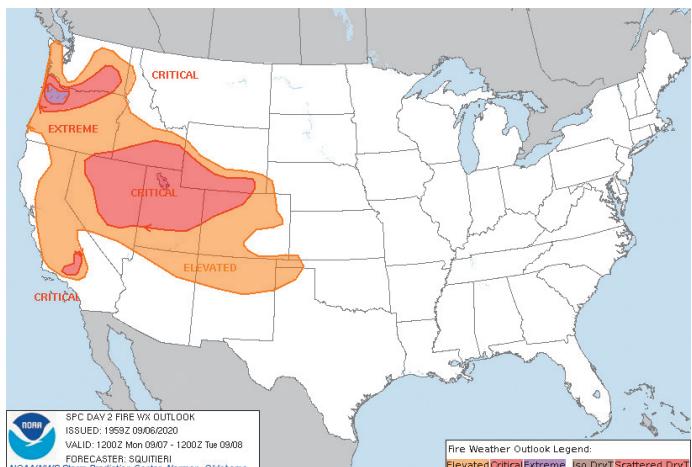
What Stockton saw that Friday was similar – except it was going to hit most of southwest Oregon. Northwest Oregon wasn't going to be spared either. On top of this, humidity levels were going to be extremely low.

The next day, Stockton and his office issued a series of Red Flag Warnings. Then Sunday, the NWS Storm Prediction Center forecast an area of "Extremely Critical Fire Weather" around Salem for Monday and Tuesday – the first time those conditions have ever registered in western Oregon.

Stockton has seen all kinds of wind events during the 22 years he's worked in Medford as a weather service forecaster.

"Not like this," he said pausing slightly to let it sink in. "Not like this. I'd never seen this before."

What followed will likely go down in Oregon history as its most intense wildfire event ever recorded: dozens of fire starts



NWS STORM PREDICTION CENTER

On Sunday before the fires, the NWS Storm Prediction Center forecast an area of "Extremely Critical Fire Weather" around Salem for Monday and Tuesday – the first time those conditions have ever registered in western Oregon.

**BELOW:** The sky glows red as the Two Four Two Fire burns in the distance in this image taken overnight Sept. 7-8, 2020 outside Chiloquin, Ore.

between Monday and Tuesday with the winds driving the flames quickly across the landscape. Thousands of homes and structures burned. The wind event that spanned those two days is already responsible for nearly a million acres burned in western Oregon – and the fires still aren't out.

But climate scientists aren't dismissing the scope of these fires as a windy act of God or a fluke of nature. One of the big questions following Oregon's 2020 wildfires will be: Just how many links are there to human-caused climate change?

## The setup

While Oregon hasn't seen this kind of wildfire season before, it's not exactly unfamiliar – especially as climate change plays out.

"It fits into a many-year western United States pattern of more fires. More large fires. More destructive fires," said Erica Fleishman, director of the Oregon Climate Change Research Institute at Oregon State University. "And all of that is consistent with what climate scientists and ecologists and others have been projecting for decades."

Indeed, this has been the refrain from climate scientists for years, something broadly accepted by political leaders in the Pacific Northwest and California, although largely denied or ignored by the Trump administration.

"This is truly the bellwether for climate change on the West Coast," Oregon Gov. Kate Brown told CNN. "This is a wake-up call for all of us that we've got to do everything in our power to tackle climate change."

The scientific evidence is clear that burning fossil fuels sends carbon dioxide and other gasses into the atmosphere. Trapped there, they cause global temperatures to rise.

And one of the most direct consequences of climate change is drought – a condition emerging as part of Oregon's "new normal" and a stage-setter for the recent wildfire event.

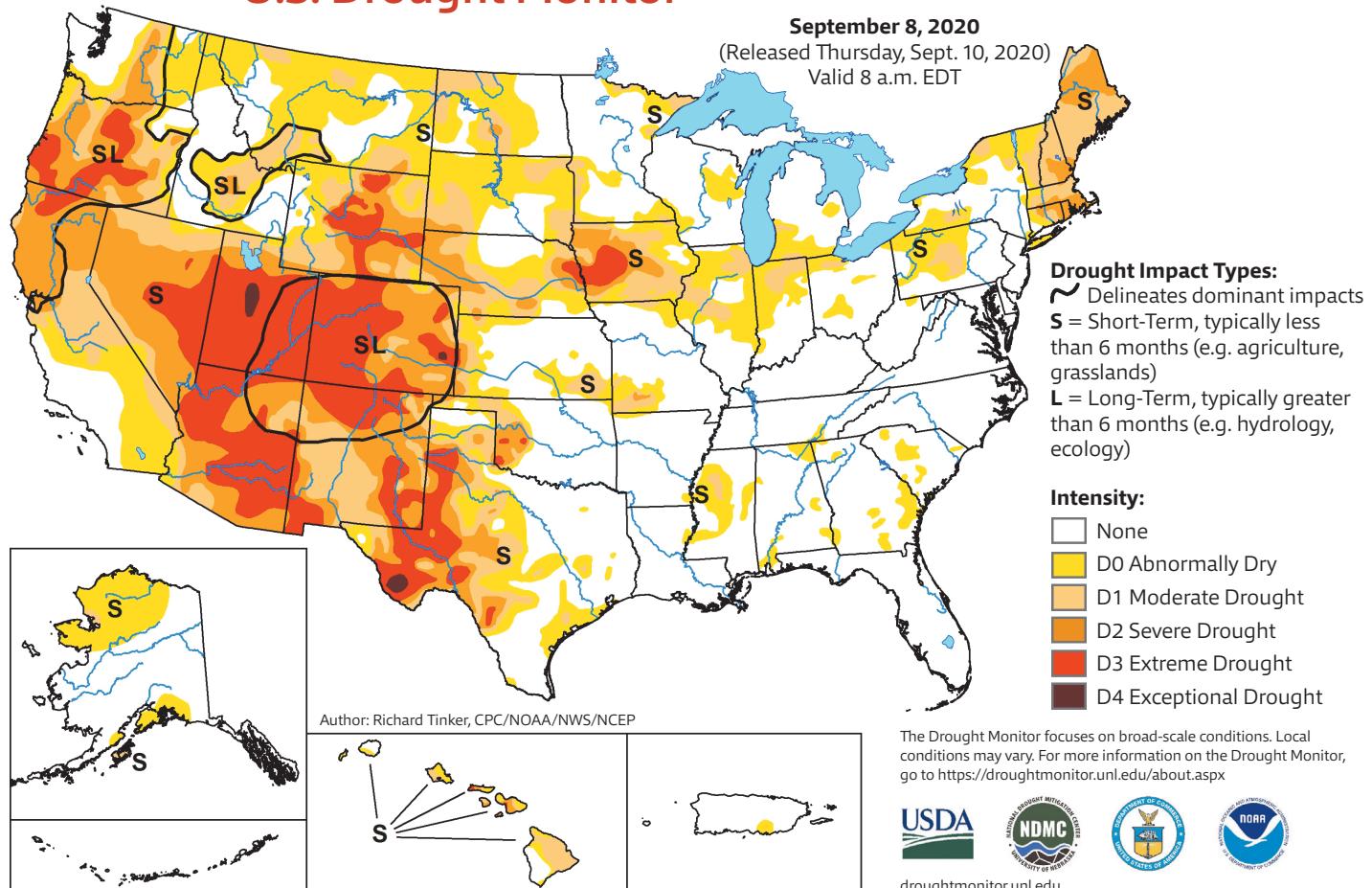
When the fires hit Oregon, about a quarter of the state was experiencing "extreme drought," with much of the state west of the Cascades under those conditions. More than 80% of the state was under "moderate drought" or worse.

Since 2000, there's only been one year (2006) that Oregon has not experienced at least moderate levels of drought. And in only four of these years did Oregon not have severe drought.

"Drought certainly contributed to the fires that we're seeing now," Fleishman said.

Under drought conditions, plants and trees have less available moisture, creating dry fuels that burn readily during wildfire. Drought conditions can also stress trees, which are then more likely to succumb to insect infestations. Trees die. And dead trees burn.

## U.S. Drought Monitor



About a quarter of Oregon was experiencing extreme drought conditions as large wildfires spread across the western part of the state.

UNITED STATES DROUGHT MONITOR / OPB

Drought conditions are linked to climate-driven temperature increases across wide swaths of the western United States. According to the National Climate Assessment, the Northwest has seen a rise of more than 1.5 degrees Fahrenheit in the average annual temperature. Northwest winters are warming faster than our summers, meaning the precipitation is increasingly falling as rain instead of building the snowpack. Less snowpack means less water flowing out of the mountains in the summer, triggering drought and drying out our forests earlier.

Multiple years of drought compound the problem.

“Maybe you never have reason to think of the upper couple meters of soil, but it’s actually quite important,” said Oregon State climatologist Larry O’Neill.

If you want to recharge groundwater supplies that humans and ecosystems rely on, rain and snowmelt need to seep down through the upper layers of soil. During droughts, that moisture in the soil and in the groundwater gets depleted slowly, without enough new moisture to replace it.

“So over many years, it just slowly deteriorates,” he said.

And so, with that kind of moisture-deprived soil and vegetation in western Oregon going into Labor Day weekend, O’Neill said, “it’s like someone poured gasoline on the forest.”

The connection between drought, temperature and climate change in the West is well-established. But what about the anomalous wind event that set Oregon’s fires in motion?

“I do think that there is a connection with climate change. Climate change will alter circulation patterns globally, so it’s not unreasonable to expect,” O’Neill said. “It’s just getting at some of the details of exactly where and how that’s occurring that maybe we still don’t know.”

This question pushes up against the leading edge of climate science, and a theory that seeks to explain the increase in severe weather events in North America – from heat waves to extreme cold snaps to rapid and radical weather swings and, further down the line of cause and effect, potentially even high wind events.

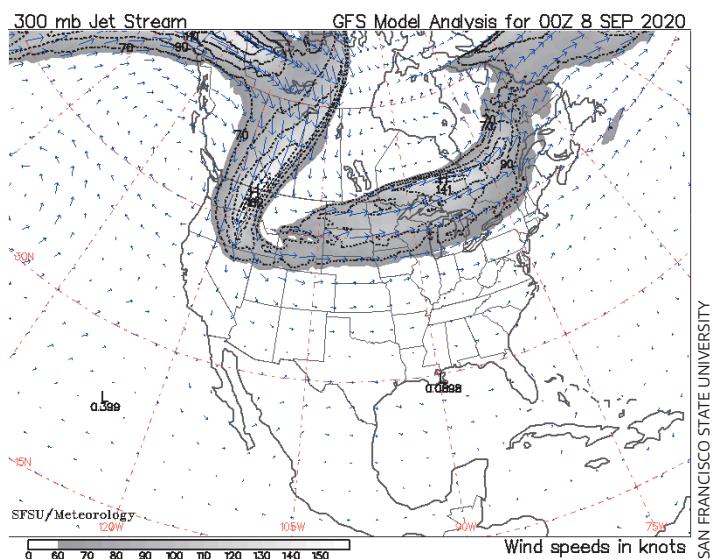
“It’s really all about getting ready for the future and understanding what kinds of extremes we’re going to be facing in different parts of the world,” said Jennifer Francis of the Woodwell Climate Research Center in Massachusetts.

The extremes in weather can be connected to the jet stream, a high-altitude river of air that circles the globe. The jet stream that matters for Oregon flows west over the mid-latitudes of the Northern Hemisphere. It has the ability to influence local weather conditions because it forms the boundary between and can push around high- and low-pressure systems. When the jet stream flows fast, it’s relatively flat. But when the air currents lose speed, the jet stream gets wavy. This is when extreme weather events often happen.

When the powerful wind event hit Oregon on Labor Day, the jet stream wasn’t just wavy, the slope was becoming steeper than the Cascades themselves. The jet stream over the Pacific Northwest dipped south, and the air flow helped steer the unusual weather system that caused the extreme winds down into Oregon.

Climate scientists want to know what causes the jet stream to become wavy and if we should expect these extreme weather events more often in the future as global temperatures continue to rise.

Back in 2012, Francis first put forward the wavy jet stream



As Labor Day approached, the jet stream started to dip down and helped funnel the unusual weather system that brought high winds and major wildfires across Oregon.

hypothesis, saying that climate change-triggered warming in the Arctic is causing jet stream winds to slow down.

Since then, dozens of scientists have been trying to test this.

“It is still a very active research topic, but the evidence is piling up that we are seeing this connection between the rapid warming in the far north and tendency for these wavy patterns to happen in the jet stream that can lead to these long-lived weather conditions,” she said.

But she acknowledges it’s difficult to test because the physics of our atmosphere, the warming happening in the Arctic, and interplay between the two are extremely complex. Francis says different climate models yield varying results when trying to show and predict the effect of climate change on the jet stream in the future.

In February, a paper out of the United Kingdom found the warming Arctic was not increasing the waviness of the jet stream.

But much of the research coming out suggests links that connect global warming to changes in jet stream behavior and extreme weather events, including those in Oregon.

Penn State Earth System Science Center director Michael Mann estimates the number of these wavy jet stream events will increase by 50% by the end of the century if the current climate change trajectory remains the same.

“Most of the truly unprecedented extreme weather disasters we’ve seen in recent summers throughout the Northern Hemisphere – the floods and heatwaves and droughts. Most of them ... have been associated with these resonance [wavy jet stream] events,” Mann said. “And they are getting more frequent because of human-caused planetary warming.”

While it’s generally scientific folly to attribute any single extreme weather event directly to climate change, Mann says to think of the situation like someone who comes down with lung cancer after a lifetime of smoking.

“You can’t prove any one cigarette led to the lung cancer, but you know all of them contributed. It’s sort of the same thing here. It’s probabilistic,” he said.



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And while the sinews connecting Oregon's Labor Day wind storm and climate change are far from being firmly established, it's safe to say extreme weather events – many of which increase wildfire risk in the state – are likely to increase in frequency in the coming decades.

## The ghosts of climate future

Eventually, enough rain will fall to quench Oregon's fires. The 2020 fire season will be behind us and we'll assess the damage and start to rebuild towns and homes.

In the forests that burned, a different kind of recovery will begin – the process of regeneration. And here, too, a changing climate will shape our landscape.

Kerry Kemp, a forest ecologist for the Oregon Nature Conservancy, studies forest resiliency, or the ability of forests to come back after wildfire or other major disturbance.

For new trees to grow in the forest, living ones must be nearby to act as a seed source. And then once those seeds start growing, they're more susceptible to drought than established trees.

"The resilience of these forests is likely to be lower when there's a mismatch between the current climate and the climate niche for tree regeneration," Kemp said.

As the climate changes, a given location may no longer be capable of supporting tree regrowth the way it could when temperatures were lower and weather patterns were different. In some parts of the West, it's already happening, she said.

This likely won't be a concern for the Cascade range forests east of the Willamette Valley. Conditions remain suitable for the regrowth of dominant species like Douglas fir. Kemp says the issues arise on the edges.

"This is especially true in places that were marginal for forest occurrence or on the edge between forest and woodlands or

grasslands, savannah-type ecosystems prior to the fire," Kemp said, adding that in these places the ecosystem transitions could already be underway as a result of climate change and are just expedited by fire.

Melissa Lucash, a forest researcher at the University of Oregon, has studied how trees regrow after fire in the Klamath region. She found that Douglas fir came back regardless whether they were replanted or left to return naturally.

"Ponderosa pine, you could tell the difference. Ponderosa pine really benefited from the additional planting," she said. "So if you're interested in diversity and capturing lots of species, some of which might not be as drought tolerant, then planting was more successful and helpful."

And overall, the outlook for the forests of the Klamath region even before the fires wasn't encouraging. Based on her research, at the current rate of warming under climate change, Lucash expects 30% of the dry forests of southwest Oregon and Northern California will transition to shrubland.

Depending on what the goals for the land is – whether it's being managed for habitat, recreation or clear-cut logging – it may not really matter what comes back after wildfire. But if re-establishing forests for the long haul is desired, climate challenges could require more intense and sustained intervention from humans than it would have even 30 years back.

And ultimately the forests of Oregon's past could look very different from the forests of our future.



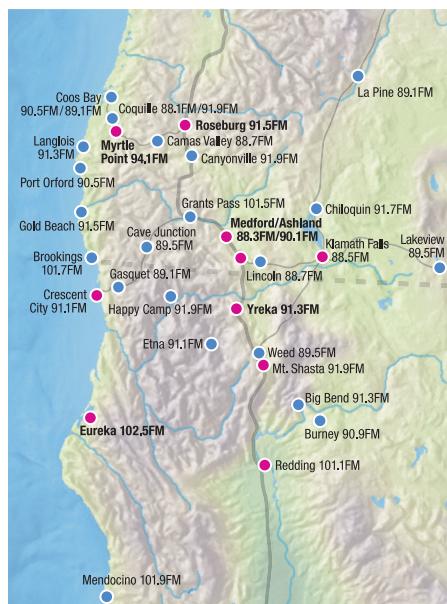
Jes Burns is a reporter for OPB's Science & Environment unit. Jes has a degree in English literature from Duke University and a master's degree from the University of Oregon's School of Journalism and Communications.



A firefighter monitors a burnout in the Chetco Bar Fire, Tuesday, Sept. 19, 2017.

ANDY LYON / VIA INCWEB

# Classics & News Service



- FM Transmitters provide extended regional service. (KSOR, 90.1FM is JPR's strongest transmitter and provides coverage throughout the Rogue Valley.)
- FM Translators provide low-powered local service.

## Monday through Friday

5:00am	Morning Edition
7:00am	First Concert
12:00pm	Siskiyou Music Hall
4:00pm	All Things Considered
6:30pm	The Daily
7:00pm	Exploring Music
8:00pm	State Farm Music Hall

## Saturday

5:00am	Weekend Edition
8:00am	First Concert
10:00am	WFMT Opera Series (through 11/28)
12:00pm	Metropolitan Opera begins 12/5
2:00pm	Played in Oregon

## Stations

**KSOR** 90.1 FM  
ASHLAND  
**KSRG** 88.3 FM  
ASHLAND

**KSRS** 91.5 FM  
ROSEBURG  
**KNYR** 91.3 FM  
YREKA  
**KOOZ** 94.1 FM  
MYRTLE POINT/COOS BAY

**KZBY** 90.5 FM  
COOS BAY  
**KLMF** 88.5 FM  
KLAMATH FALLS  
**KNHT** 102.5 FM  
RIO DELL/EUREKA

**KLDD** 91.9 FM  
MT. SHASTA  
**KHEC** 91.1 FM  
CRESCENT CITY  
**KWCA** 101.1 FM  
REDDING

3:00pm	The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center
4:00pm	All Things Considered
5:00pm	New York Philharmonic
7:00pm	State Farm Music Hall

## Sunday

5:00am	Weekend Edition
9:00am	Millennium of Music
10:00am	Sunday Baroque
12:00pm	Siskiyou Music Hall
2:00pm	Performance Today Weekend
4:00pm	All Things Considered
5:00pm	Chicago Symphony Orchestra
7:00pm	Music From Tanglewood (through 11/14)
8:00pm	Center Stage From Wolf Trap begins 11/5
	State Farm Music Hall

## Translators

**Big Bend** 91.3 FM  
**Brookings** 101.7 FM  
**Burney** 90.9 FM

**Camas Valley** 88.7 FM  
**Canyonville** 91.9 FM  
**Cave Junction** 89.5 FM  
**Chiloquin** 91.7 FM  
**Coquille** 88.1 FM

**Coos Bay**  
90.5 FM / 89.1 FM  
**Etna / Ft. Jones** 91.1 FM  
**Gasquet** 89.1 FM  
**Gold Beach** 91.5 FM

**Grants Pass** 101.5 FM  
**Happy Camp** 91.9 FM  
**Lakeview** 89.5 FM  
**Langlois, Sixes** 91.3 FM  
**LaPine/Beaver Marsh** 89.1 FM

**Lincoln** 88.7 FM  
**Mendocino** 101.9 FM  
**Port Orford** 90.5 FM  
**Weed** 89.5 FM

## WFMT Radio Network Opera Series

Nov 7 – *Scalia/Ginsberg* by Derrick Wang  
Trial by Jury by Arthur Sullivan

Nov 14 – *Tosca* by Giacomo Puccini

Nov 21 – *Il Turco in Italia* by Gioachino Rossini

Nov 28 – *Cavalleria Rusticana* by Pietro Mascagni  
*Pagliacci* by Ruggero Leoncavallo

## Metropolitan Opera

Dec 5 – *War and Peace* by Sergei Prokofiev

Dec 12 – *Fidelio* by Ludwig van Beethoven

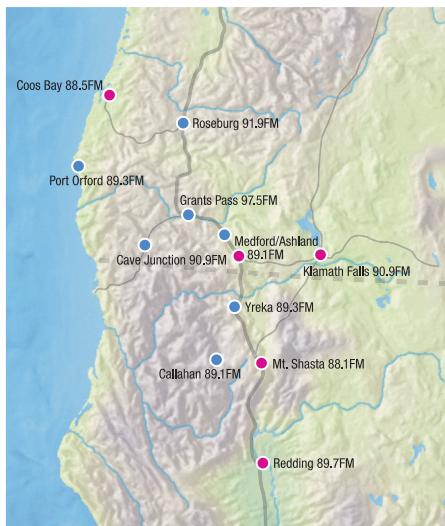
Dec 19 – *Hansel and Gretel* by Engelbert Humperdinck

Dec 26 – *The Magic Flute* by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart



The Metropolitan Opera has made the extremely difficult decision to cancel the entirety of the 2020–21 season

# Rhythm & News Service



● FM Transmitters provide extended regional service.

● FM Translators provide low-powered local service.

## Stations

**KSMF** 89.1 FM  
ASHLAND

**KSBA** 88.5 FM  
COOS BAY

**KSKF** 90.9 FM  
KLAMATH FALLS

**KNCA** 89.7 FM  
BURNLEY/REDDING

**KNSQ** 88.1 FM  
MT. SHASTA

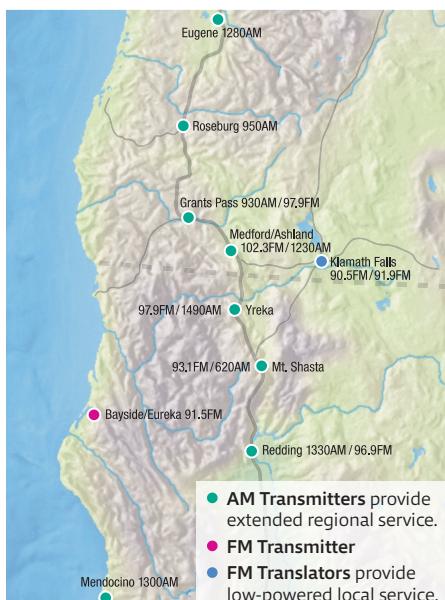
**KVYA** 91.5 FM  
CEDARVILLE/  
SURPRISE VALLEY

## Translators

**Callahan/Ft Jones** 89.1 FM  
**Cave Junction** 90.9 FM

**Grants Pass** 97.5 FM  
**Port Orford** 89.3 FM  
**Roseburg** 91.9 FM  
**Yreka** 89.3 FM

# News & Information Service



## Translators

**Klamath Falls** 90.5 FM / 91.9 FM

**Ashland/Medford** 102.3 FM

**Yreka** 97.9 FM   **Grants Pass** 97.9 FM   **Mt. Shasta** 93.1 FM   **Redding** 96.9 FM

## Stations

**KJK** AM 1230  
TALENT

**KAGI** AM 930  
GRANTS PASS

**KTBR** AM 950  
ROSEBURG

**KRVM** AM 1280  
EUGENE

**KSYC** AM 1490  
YREKA

**KMJC** AM 620  
MT. SHASTA

**KPMO** AM 1300  
MENDOCINO

**KNHM** 91.5 FM  
BAYSIDE/EUREKA

**KJPR** AM 1330  
SHASTA LAKE CITY/  
REDDING

## Monday through Friday

5:00am BBC World Service  
7:00am 1A  
8:00am The Jefferson Exchange  
9:58am StarDate  
10:00am The Takeaway  
11:00am Here & Now  
1:00pm BBC News Hour  
1:30pm The Daily  
2:00pm Think  
3:00pm Fresh Air  
4:00pm PRI's The World  
5:00pm On Point  
6:00pm 1A  
7:00pm Fresh Air (repeat)  
8:00pm The Jefferson Exchange  
(repeat of 8am broadcast)  
9:58pm StarDate  
10:00pm BBC World Service

## Saturday

5:00am BBC World Service  
7:00am Inside Europe  
8:00am Day 6  
9:00am Freakonomics Radio  
10:00am Planet Money  
11:00am Hidden Brain  
12:00pm Living on Earth  
1:00pm Science Friday  
3:00pm To the Best of Our Knowledge  
5:00pm Politics with Amy Walter  
6:00pm Selected Shorts  
7:00pm BBC World Service

## Sunday

5:00am BBC World Service  
8:00am On The Media  
9:00am Innovation Hub  
10:00am Reveal  
11:00am This American Life  
12:00pm TED Radio Hour  
1:00pm Political Junkie  
2:00pm Fresh Air Weekend  
3:00pm Milk Street Radio  
4:00pm Travel with Rick Steves  
5:00pm To the Best of Our Knowledge  
7:00pm BBC World Service

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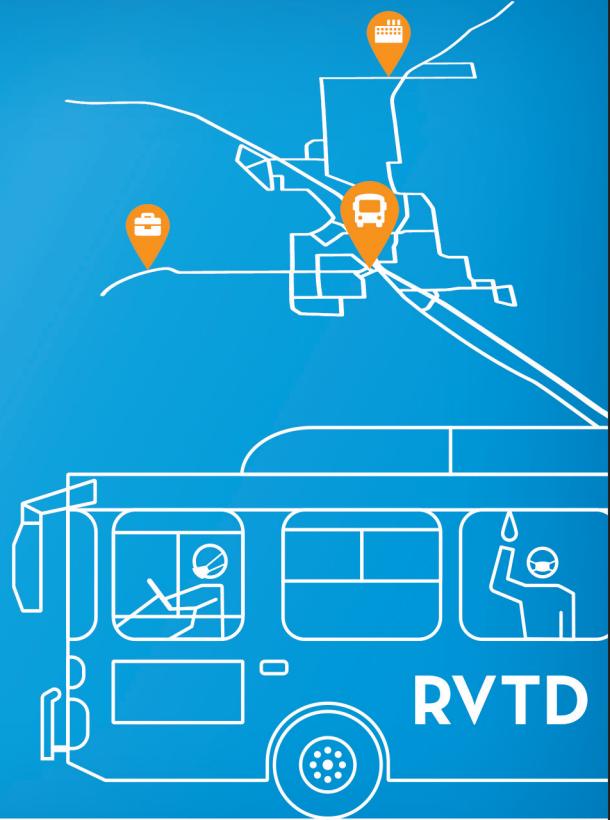
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“There are only two industries that refer to their customers as ‘users’—illegal drugs and software.” — *Edward Tufte*

# The Social Solution

I recently watched the new Netflix documentary *The Social Dilemma*. It was disturbing.

I'd always known that social media sites like Facebook and Twitter were tracking everything we do on their platforms. I understood the Internet adage: “If the service is free, you're the product.” I also knew how the underlying machine learning algorithms, the code running in the background, was learning more and more about each of us as we and billions of other users voluntarily fed it more and more data.

But it's much worse than I imagined. Far worse. Like, end-of-civilization-as-we-know-it worse. For those of you who have not yet seen *The Social Dilemma*, here's some of the key points:

- Persuasive design techniques like push notifications and the endless scroll of your newsfeed have created a dopamine-driven feedback loop that keeps you addicted to your devices.
- We are participants in the “attention extraction economy” in which social media companies seek to monetize and profit from our attention and engagement.
- Social media companies engage in “surveillance capitalism”, which refers to the mass surveillance of our online activity and the commodification of this data for sale. Data collected on us is used to predict and influence our purchases, behaviors, and thoughts.
- Social media advertising gives anyone the ability to reach huge numbers of people with ease, giving bad actors the tools to sow unrest and fuel political divisions.
- Algorithms promote content that sparks outrage, hate, and amplifies biases within the data that we feed them.

We've constructed a daunting digital behemoth from silicon and precious metals, computer code, binary bits of 1s and 0s flying around the globe at the speed of light, and algorithms that work day and night to shape our behavior.

You and I are Davids to these social media Goliaths. But we will not defeat them in a fight. There is only one solution to this social dilemma—disengagement.

“To free yourself, to be more authentic, to be less addicted, to be less manipulated, to be less paranoid...for all these marvelous reasons, delete your [social media] accounts,” writes Jaron Lanier in his 2018 book with the lengthy but provocative title *Ten Arguments for Deleting Your Social Media Accounts Right Now*.

Confession time: I have not deleted my social media accounts but I have vastly reduced my engagement. I'm happier, healthier, and more productive because of it.



Lanier is a Renaissance Man for the 21st century. He's a computer scientist, composer, artist, and author who has written numerous articles and books about the impact of technology on human culture. *Ten Arguments* reads like a manifesto and a self-help book got together and had a baby. I highly recommend it. Here are Lanier's 10 arguments for why you should delete your social media accounts:

## 1. You are losing your free will.

We're tracked, measured, and manipulated by algorithms gorging on our data. The goal is more and more engagement. “Addiction gradually turns you into a zombie. Zombies don't have free will.”

## 2. Quitting social media is the most finely targeted way to resist the insanity of our times.

Your feeds are constantly tweaked to influence your behavior. Negative emotions are amplified. It's a BUMMER machine: “Behaviors of Users Modified and Made into an Empire for Rent”.

## 3. Social media is making you an asshole.

If you're a jerk, social media will amplify that. But even if you're a nice person, social media will tug at “a nasty thing inside yourself, an insecurity, a sense of low self-esteem, a yearning to lash out, to swat someone down”.

## 4. Social media is undermining truth.

Fake news, fake viral videos, fake users, real users being disingenuous, fake product reviews, fake conspiracy theories. The truth is washed away by this daily deluge of fakery.

Continued on page 30



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I tend to group novels on the way I categorize meals: some are mere fuel, to be read once and not revisited, others are to be savoured and returned to.

## “The book of his good acts” (*Coriolanus*)

Live theatre is gradually returning to our region. At the time of writing, there have been some socially -distanced indoor performances, and, by the time you read this, they will have been followed by outdoor theatre. But it will be some time before OSF is fully reopened. In the meantime, I have been occupied in reading, and I share a couple of recommendations which might be of interest for gifts in the coming holiday season. One is a novel, the other a book about Shakespeare and America.

The novel is *Hamnet*: *A Novel of the Plague*, by Maggie O’Farrell, an account of the early life and career of a playwright from Stratford. I have a particular interest in fictional versions of the life of Shakespeare, and gave a Carpenter Noon talk on the topic in 2009 to coincide with a production of the play *Equivocation* (will Carpenter Noons ever return?).

At that time I felt obliged to observe that not all fictional treatments of Shakespeare are successful. For example, in *The Quality of Mercy* by Faye Kellerman (1989), Shakespeare visits the widow of a friend:

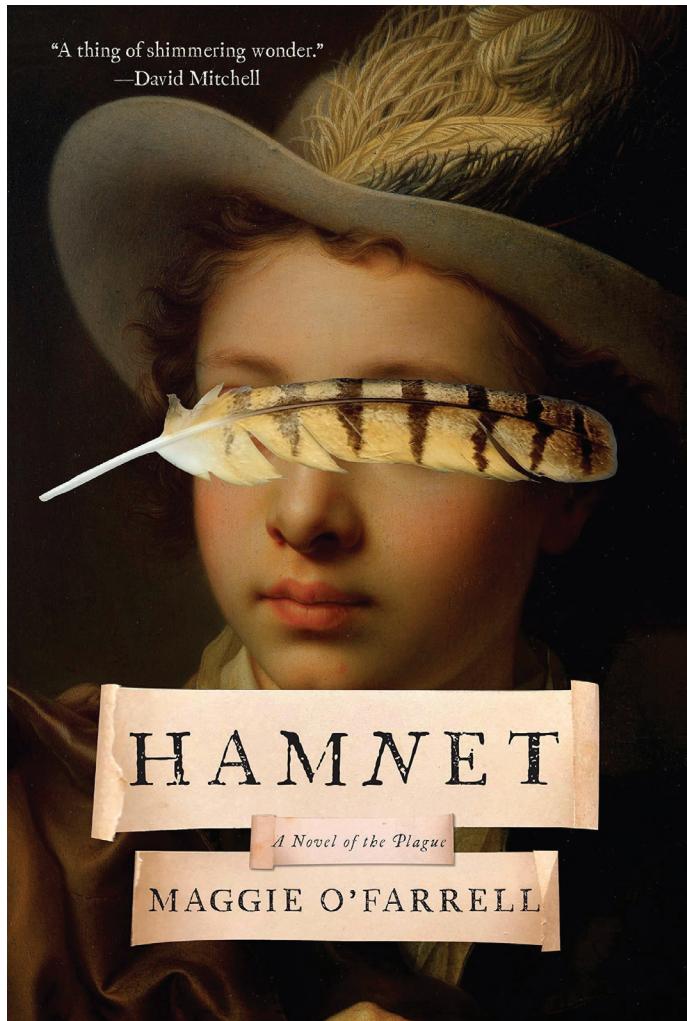
“As much as Shakespeare felt her desperate need, beyond words of comfort, there was nothing he could do. He wasn’t Lazarus: he couldn’t raise the dead.”

Neither could Lazarus!

O’Farrell’s novel is altogether more successful. I tend to group novels on the way I categorise meals: some are mere fuel, to be read once and not revisited, others are to be savoured and returned to. This is in the latter category. Shakespeare had three children. His two daughters, Susanna and Judith, lived on after he died; his son did not. This novel takes its title from that son, who died at the age of eleven (and was named after one of the Shakespeares’ neighbors), although its principal focus is the mother of the children, given the name Agnes in this book. The father of the children, younger than Agnes, is never named, although we follow his career from Stratford to London, up to the point when he writes a play called *Hamlet*, some four years after the death of his son.

O’Farrell situates the writer in the context of his family and his father’s business. She emphasises that he is the son of a glove-maker, just as Philip Roth did in *American Pastoral* (1997). In that book, Al Haberman, a glove-maker talks to his wife, about famous sons of glovers:

“You know who else, aside from Sir Walter and my two sons? William Shakespeare. Father was a glover who couldn’t read and write his own name.”



He goes to quote from *Romeo and Juliet*—somewhat inaccurately

“See the way she leans her cheek on her hand? I only wish I was the glove on that hand so that I could touch that cheek”

In *Hamnet*, O’Farrell describes a fully-imagined life for Anne/Agnes, and also devotes much detail to the spread of the plague (at a time when doctors wore elaborate protective masks). She provides a reason for Shakespeare’s move from Stratford

# Theatre

Continued from page 29

to London, and some background to his marriage (and the second-best bed). I thought the account of the spread of plague was excellent, and the description of the impact of Hamnet's death on his parents supremely moving. I remain unconvinced of the connection between the names Hamnet and Hamlet, and I question whether the women in Shakespeare's household were all literate. But then, Shakespeare is never named...

In her acknowledgments section, Maggie O'Farrell cites a work by James Shapiro, and it is to his latest book that I now turn. His *Shakespeare in a Divided America: What his Plays Tell us about our Past and Future* includes discussion of a bardic fiction, *Shakespeare in Love*, so the wheel goes full circle. Although Professor Shapiro has been a vociferous critic of Play on! Shakespeare, I have long been an admirer of his work, and this latest book is no disappointment. This is not a survey nor an anthology—there are several of those already published including one edited by James Shapiro himself. Instead this readable, not over-scholarly book follows the methodology of two of his most successful previous books in drilling down to examine eight defining moments in America's history which have been touched by the plays of Shakespeare. These range from the reaction of President John Quincy Adams to *Othello*, through the vogue for female Romeos in the mid-nineteenth century,

the riot in Astor Place in 1849, and right up to the controversial 2017 production of *Julius Caesar* in New York in which the actor playing Caesar bore a close resemblance to President Trump. This was not a production I saw (although I read a great deal about it), but it is so vividly described here that I will probably never see the play in future without calling this version to mind.

I shall return in more detail in to this fascinating book in my January column, but I'd like to note here that it is largely concerned with Shakespeare's tragedies, rather than his comedies, and with the plays on the stage rather than on the page: with the interplay between actors and audience. Much of the impact of these defining moments, for good or ill, came from theatre as a group activity, a dynamic which even the best of Zoom cannot emulate.



Geoff Ridden has taught in universities in Africa, Europe and North America. Since moving to Ashland in 2008, he has become a familiar figure on radio, in the theatre, in the lecture hall and on the concert stage. He is artistic director of the Classic Readings Theatre Company and has a particular interest in adaptations of the plays of Shakespeare. Email [geoff.ridden@gmail.com](mailto:geoff.ridden@gmail.com)

## Inside The Box

Continued from page 27

### 5. Social media is making what you say meaningless.

Everything is mashed up and decontextualized online. "When context is surrendered to the platform, communication and culture become petty, shallow, predictable."

### 6. Social media is destroying your capacity for empathy.

The world you see via your feed is invisible to the people who don't understand you. You're a foreigner to their worldview. An outsider. The "other". This goes both ways.

### 7. Social media is making you unhappy.

It's a stupid competition that you signed up for when you signed up for your account and had zero followers and zero "likes". Social media is architected to create social competition and anxiety. It taps into your brain's deepest programming to keep you engaged, keep you addicted, even if it makes you unhappy.

### 8. Social media doesn't want you to have economic dignity.

You provide social media companies with your data and they profit from it. You are a cog in their money-making machine.

### 9. Social media is making politics impossible.

If 2020 hasn't proven this point, I don't know what else will. No useful political interactions occur on social media platforms, especially among politicians.

### 10. Social media hates your soul.

A bit extravagant but to some degree engaging in social media does feel like a deal with the devil in which you sacrifice your free will and parts of yourself to "the platform". Social media doesn't hate your soul but it will eat it if you're not wary.

It's not any one thing in isolation that makes social media a scourge upon society. It's the pernicious collective of all its moving parts and purposes. Perhaps if we all disengaged from social media we would start behaving more like a nation of people rather than warring gangs of "users" led by whomever has risen to the level of being the biggest jerk.



Scott Dewing is a technologist, writer, and educator. This is a condensed version of his 2019 TEDxAshland Talk.

ERIC TEEL

# Empty Stages

March 12th was set to be a pretty exciting day here at the station. One of our favorite bands—Brooklyn's The Lone Bellow—was scheduled to arrive in the early hours of the morning after driving overnight from Portland, and they were to perform live in our beautiful new studio for the first time. They hadn't been out west in a couple of years, and the logistics and timing of their visit had been worked out over many months. March 12th was a Thursday. If you're a live music fan, I bet there's a date on your 2020 calendar that is now etched in your psyche the way March 12th is etched into mine.

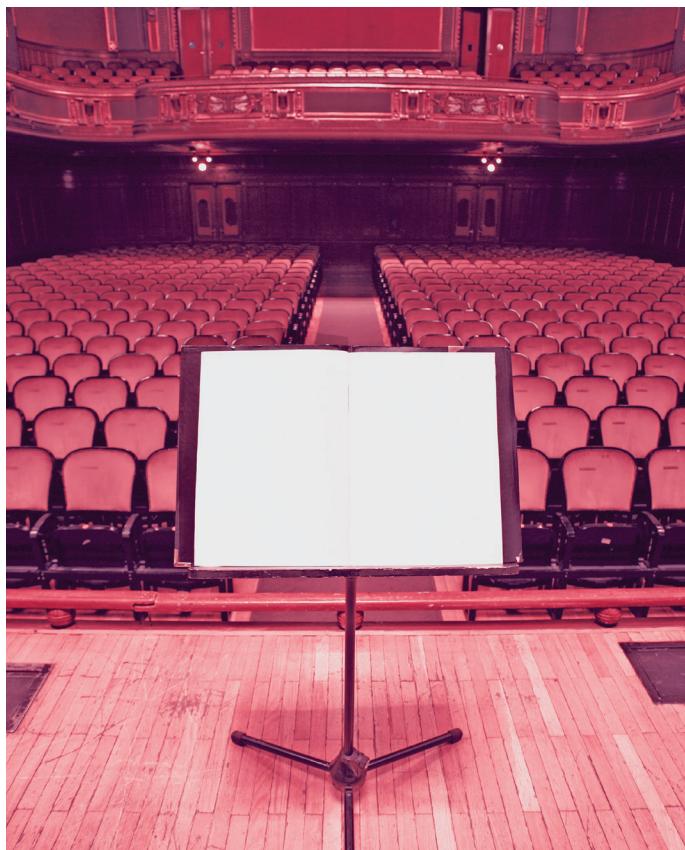
The storm clouds started forming two days earlier. On Tuesday the 10th, The Ballroom Thieves stopped by the station for a session, and then headed downtown for a show at OSF's Black Swan Theatre as part of the Ashland Folk Collective series. There was a moderate, intimate crowd assembled. Meanwhile, JPR was ramping up the promotion of an upcoming One World concert with the Weepies at the end of the month. All in all, a fairly normal day. But then late that night, I caught word that The Lone Bellow's show in Seattle that same evening would be the city's last. Large public events in Washington were done.

On Wednesday March 11th, The Lone Bellow played Portland's Revolution Hall. As they walked off stage, they learned that their concert was the last one in Oregon. They loaded their tour bus in a haze, waiting for the east coast—home to its management and label—to wake up Thursday morning and start figuring out the band's immediate future.

When I picked them up Thursday morning, everything was in a state of confusion. And we had to take extraordinary measures to even get our session recorded. After all, they'd just been in Seattle, where coronavirus cases were on the rise. Thankfully, we've got a side entrance that leads directly into the performance space. We could easily isolate the band from the rest of the station, with me in a separate control room, and we'd planned to let the room sit vacant for a week afterward, just to be safe.

As we wrapped up the session and phones got turned back on, almost simultaneously the text chimes started ringing. Zach, Brian, and Kanene (The Lone Bellow) learned that their show in San Francisco that night was off. And so was every other show on their massive tour. They were dead in the water. Effectively unemployed, thousands of miles from home, in a rented tour bus,

As they walked off stage, they learned that their concert was the last one in Oregon.



with nowhere to go but home. It was the last "public" show for the Lone Bellow for over six months. It was also the last time I saw live music.

As we near the end of 2020, musicians and promoters across the country are beginning to dip their toes in the concert waters again. For many, it's far too little and way too late. The layoff has been financially devastating. Legendary music venues like San Francisco's Slim's and Austin's Threadgill's are out of business. Hundreds of others are in a race against the calendar to get music—and money—flowing again. Earlier this year, the National Independent Venue Association launched the Save Our Stages campaign ([www.saveourstages.com](http://www.saveourstages.com)), designed to raise awareness for the particular plight of performance venues and pressure Congress for help. Concert tours have almost all been postponed to next spring. Even that is a rosy outlook, especially as coronavirus cases in many states are increasing.

## Recordings

Continued from page 31

Around our region, I don't know of any music venues that have gone under, but I'm sure there are many on life support. Even when they're allowed to hold events, public confidence in large gatherings may lag behind to such a degree that ticket sales are anemic. The recovery will probably be a slow trickle, as money, and safety seep back into our world. I feel for the hundreds of venues and thousands of struggling musicians (actors, dancers, and performers of all types) who have been cut off from their primary livelihood.

Creative folks find creative solutions. Musicians have been improving their online streaming capacity in an attempt to monetize their performances. They've launched Patreon accounts to create a new revenue stream. Through JPR's Live (from afar) Sessions, I've helped many musicians get set up with the equipment they need to record high-quality material from home and connect with fans. Promoters have been creative, too. Case in point: Ashland Folk Collective's 'rolling concerts'—staged on a flatbed trailer that traveled a short neighborhood route and allowed people to watch and listen from the relative safety of their front porches. And organizers across the country bringing back

the concept of the drive-in, modernized with micro transmitters broadcasting the action from the stage right to your safely sealed up automobile. Where there's a will, right?

I miss expensive music festivals with over-priced beer, bar shows that start way too late and end way too early, and unannounced opening acts that steal the show. I miss the energy felt in a room full of fans, the power of giant sound systems, and the talent of a great sound tech. And I miss the excitement that buzzes through JPR each time someone performs in our studio. Most of all, I miss the live music. But what I've realized I miss the most during this pandemic is the knowledge that the artists who so enrich my life with their craft are safe and financially able to weather this storm.

March 12th was a long time ago.



Eric Teel is JPR's Director of FM Network Programming and Music Director.

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LIAM MORIARTY

# Your Right To Know Is Under Attack

One of the great things about being a journalist is that it's rarely boring. It's called "news" because new things are happening all the time. Still, you do tend have some general expectations of how your work day is likely to go.

You expect you'll interview some people, you'll do some research, you'll find out what's going on in your community and you'll write about it so your neighbors can better understand local events and issues. You figure you might ask a question that annoys a public official, or you might run into someone who's unhappy with something you wrote. These days, you might even encounter someone who dismisses everything you do as "fake news." But you don't generally wake up and go to work thinking you may end up behind bars.

Unfortunately, that's the situation JPR reporter April Ehrlrich found herself in recently. She'd been covering issues surrounding homelessness in our region, especially the plight of people who've taken refuge in Jackson County's Bear Creek Greenway during the coronavirus pandemic. After the Almeda Fire ravaged the greenway in September, as many as 100 people set up camp in Hawthorne Park, in downtown Medford.

As you might expect, the impromptu tent city garnered a good deal of public attention. At a Medford City Council meeting, some people defended the encampment, pointing out that local homeless shelters were full and many of the campers had nowhere to go. Others raised the specter of crime, drug use and sexual assault and urged the city to evict the campers. After several days, Medford police announced their intention to clear the park. As news director, I sent April to cover this important story.

When the police arrived, they said the park was closed and directed reporters to a "media staging area" at the edge of the park, some distance away from the action. April identified herself as a working journalist and insisted on staying where she could see and hear how the police interacted with the campers. According to bystander videos, several officers then grabbed April, forced her into a "stress position," handcuffed her and led her away on charges of criminal trespass, interfering with

Because the City of Medford misused its power, JPR listeners didn't get to hear what happened that morning as police cleared the encampment at Hawthorne Park.



PHOTO: ERIK NEUMANN/JPR

Medford police at Hawthorne Park on Tuesday, September 22, while an encampment was being cleared.

a police officer and resisting arrest. She spent most of the day in the Jackson County Jail under appalling conditions before being released on bail late that afternoon.

For April, the experience was traumatic; being roughly arrested, run through a dehumanizing detainment procedure and facing criminal charges that could result in significant jail time is no one's idea of a good day at the office.

But for all of us at JPR News, even more alarming is the casual way the City of Medford ran roughshod over the First Amendment. Designating an area from which journalists are permitted to perform their Constitutionally-protected function—and aggressively arresting those who don't comply with that arbitrary restriction—displays an egregious lack of understanding of the bedrock principle of freedom of the press.

The Founders of this country were pretty clear about this. The citizens grant the government power, to be used to promote health, safety and the general public welfare. But, as the 19th Century English politician John Dalberg-Acton famously observed, power tends to corrupt. It often leads those given power to abuse it, to the detriment of the public. So a free press is a necessary counterweight to that tendency, to shine a light on how the government uses that power. In fact, Thomas Jefferson—who had his own issues with the rambunctious partisan press of his day—wrote in 1787 that "... were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspa-

Continued on page 35

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**OH, THE PLACES YOU'LL GO!**

— Dr. Seuss —

## JPR News Focus: Media

Continued from page 33

pers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter."

Here's the thing ... Because the City of Medford misused its power, JPR listeners didn't get to hear what happened that morning as police cleared the encampment at Hawthorne Park. Were campers offered help finding other shelter? Were their rights respected? Were they dealt with in a legal and professional way? The Medford Police Department says they were. But because our reporter was removed from the scene, JPR listeners have no independent way to know that.

The City of Medford's actions in this case are awful enough. But they're not an isolated incident. Ten days before April's arrest, Josie Huang, a reporter for NPR station KPCC in Los Angeles, was tackled and arrested while filming officers during street protests there. The L.A. County Sheriff's Department said Huang hadn't identified herself as a journalist, a claim that was disproved by video of her arrest.

In fact, the U.S. Press Freedom Tracker has documented more than 800 incidents of journalists being arrested, attacked or otherwise harassed while doing their jobs so far this year.

This is certainly a problem for news organizations and the journalists who work for them. But it's also a problem for you. Because if the government and others in power are able to keep journalists from showing you what's actually going on—as opposed to what they want you to believe is going on—your ability to effectively exercise the power of your citizenship has been curtailed.

And whether that's happening in Washington, D.C. or in Medford, Oregon, that's an unhealthy vital sign in a robust democracy.



Liam Moriarty has been covering news in the Pacific Northwest for more than 20 years. After a stint as JPR's News Director from 2002 to 2005, Liam covered the environment in Seattle, then reported on European issues from France. He returned to JPR in 2013, turning his talents to covering the stories that are important to the people of this very special region.



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(Editor's Note: This was originally posted on September 23, days after the start of the Holiday Farm Fire that scorched some 173,000 acres of the McKenzie River Valley, east of Eugene, Ore.)

## Everyday Trauma Afflicts Many

**M**any are still reeling from the tragedy upriver that befell so many of us two weeks ago. And by "reeling," I mean turning in small circles, faster and faster. Each of us has had to make space for the sadness to measure what's lost, but the world around us continues apace. This week I had to shut off the power to my house that is no longer there.

Sometimes our belongings, and almost always our homes, become part of our identity. When that aspect of our identity is no longer true, how do we not become a lesser version of ourselves? When I talk about — or even think about — my tiny house, or my neighbors, or the community around it, which verb tense should I use?

The present tense is mindless, but the past tense is heartless. Future perfect continuous fits best, but what help will that have been? You see the problem? It's not a natural state. Normal methods of coping tend to fail.

I'm still struggling to sequence things correctly. It takes effort to notice and care when things fall out of order. "Does it really matter? And if it does, why? (Or did I ask those questions out of order?)" The power company can't shut off my power without knowing what my address will have been, if events arrange themselves generously and I rebuild.

Everyone I know was delighted to welcome the rain last week, and even the thunderstorms that brought the much-needed pre-

| This week I had to shut off the power to my house that is no longer there.

cipitation. But when the lightning and thunderclap coincided, I woke with a start, convinced from my slumber that the roof over my head was being struck by lightning. One of my Blue River neighbors told me the next day that she had exactly the same reaction!

Here's my point — or what will have been my point, two minutes from now.

McKenzie River residents are experiencing a specific trauma related to the tragedies that converged into the Holiday Farm fire. It's making us peculiar to others, but similar to one another. Our suffering soon will have passed. That's fortunate for us. Before too long, we will have rejoined your ranks.

Now consider those who are very poor or unhoused or otherwise oppressed. Their trauma is not unlike ours — except that it's accepted and unending. There is no future perfect continuous envisioned for them, but all the same handicaps apply.

Can they imagine a future time when they won't be poor? Many can't. They are poor and they will be poor — continuously, and not perfectly. They can't fill out the forms for assistance correctly — they can't help themselves — because they get things out of order. They aren't lesser than us. They have burdens we don't understand.

Trauma hijacks your sanity. If it's for a short time, we make amends. When it's continuous with no end in sight, it's debilitating. Their identity is not less than yours and mine, but they have fewer attachments to ground them.

How do we care for the most vulnerable among us? That's the one question I wish that someday we will have answered.



Don Kahle (fridays@dksez.com) will have written a column each Friday for The Register-Guard and archives past columns at [www.dksez.com](http://www.dksez.com). The post Everyday Trauma Afflicts Many appeared first on dkSez ::::::: Don Kahle's blog.

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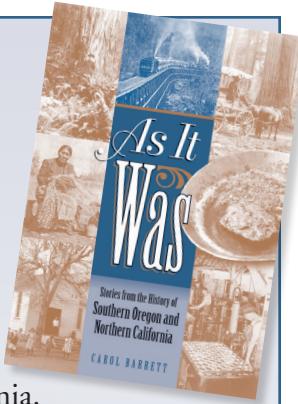
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ANERI PATTANI

# Sleepless Nights, Hair Loss And Cracked Teeth: Pandemic Stress Takes Its Toll

**R**eports are on the rise of symptoms such as headaches, stomach problems and flare-ups of autoimmune disorders. Here's why chronic stress can make our bodies hurt, and what to do about it.

In late March, shortly after New York state closed nonessential businesses and asked people to stay home, Ashley Laderer began waking each morning with a throbbing headache.

"The pressure was so intense it felt like my head was going to explode," the 27-year-old freelance writer from Long Island recalls.

She tried spending less time on the computer and taking over-the-counter pain medication, but the pounding kept breaking through—a constant drumbeat to accompany her equally incessant worries about COVID-19.

"Every day I lived in fear that I was going to get it and I was going to infect my whole family," she says.

After a month and a half, Laderer decided to visit a neurologist, who ordered an MRI. But the doctor found no physical cause. The scan was clear.

Then he asked: Are you under a lot of stress?

Throughout the pandemic, people who never had the coronavirus have been reporting a host of seemingly unrelated symptoms: excruciating headaches, episodes of hair loss, upset stomach for weeks on end, sudden outbreaks of shingles and flare-ups of autoimmune disorders. The disparate symptoms, often in otherwise healthy individuals, have puzzled doctors and patients alike, sometimes resulting in a series of visits to specialists with few answers.

But it turns out there's a common thread among many of these conditions, one that has been months in the making: chronic stress.

Although people often underestimate the influence of the mind on the body, a growing catalog of research shows that high levels of stress over an extended period of time can drastically alter physical function and affect nearly every organ system.

Now at least eight months into the pandemic, alongside a divisive election cycle and racial unrest, those effects are showing up in a variety of symptoms.

"The mental health component of COVID is starting to come like a tsunami," says Dr. Jennifer Love, a California-based psychiatrist and co-author of an upcoming book on how to heal from chronic stress.

Nationwide, surveys have found increasing rates of depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts during the pandemic. But



many medical experts say it's too soon to measure the related physical symptoms since they generally appear months after the stress begins.

Data from FAIR Health, a nonprofit database that provides cost information to the health industry and consumers, showed increases in the percentage of medical claims related to conditions triggered or exacerbated by stress, such as multiple sclerosis or shingles. The portion of claims for the autoimmune disease lupus, for example, showed one of the biggest increases—12% this year—compared with the same period last year (January to August).

Express Scripts, a major pharmacy benefit manager, reported that prescriptions for anti-insomnia medications increased 15% early in the pandemic.

Perhaps the strongest indicator comes from doctors reporting a growing number of patients with physical symptoms for which they can't determine a cause.

Shilpi Khetarpal, a dermatologist at the Cleveland Clinic, used to see about five patients a week with stress-related hair loss. Since mid-June, that number has jumped to 20 or 25. Mostly women, ages 20 to 80, are reporting hair coming out in fistfuls, Khetarpal says.

In Houston, at least a dozen patients have told fertility specialist Dr. Rashmi Kudesia they're having irregular menstrual cycles, changes in cervical discharge and breast tenderness, despite normal hormone levels.

Stress is also the culprit dentists are pointing to for the rapid increase in patients with teeth grinding, teeth fractures and temporomandibular joint disorder.

"We, as humans, like to have the idea that we are in control of our minds and that stress isn't a big deal," Love says. "But it's simply not true."

## How mental stress becomes physical

Stress causes physical changes in the body that can affect nearly every organ system.

Although symptoms of chronic stress are often dismissed as being in one's head, the pain is real, says Kate Harkness, a professor of psychology and psychiatry at Queen's University in Ontario.

When the body feels unsafe—whether it's a physical threat of attack or a psychological fear of losing a job or catching a disease—the brain signals adrenal glands to pump stress hormones. Adrenaline and cortisol flood the body, activating the fight-or-flight response. They also disrupt bodily functions that aren't necessary for immediate survival, such as digestion and reproduction.

When the danger is over, the hormones return to normal levels. But during chronic stress, such as a pandemic, the body keeps pumping out stress hormones until it tires itself out. This leads to increased inflammation throughout the body and brain, and a poorly functioning immune system.

Studies link chronic stress to heart disease, muscle tension, gastrointestinal issues and even physical shrinking of the hippocampus, an area of the brain associated with memory and learning. As the immune system acts up, some people can even develop new allergic reactions, Harkness says.

The good news is that many of these symptoms are reversible. But it's important to recognize them early, especially when it comes to the brain, says Barbara Sahakian, a professor of clinical neuropsychology at the University of Cambridge.

"The brain is plastic, so we can to some extent modify it," Sahakian says. "But we don't know if there's a cliff beyond which you can't reverse a change. So the sooner you catch something, the better."

## The day-to-day impact

In some ways, mental health awareness has increased during the pandemic. TV shows are flush with ads for therapy and meditation apps, such as Talkspace and Calm, and companies are announcing mental health days off for staff.

But those spurts of attention fail to reveal the full impact of poor mental health on people's daily lives.

For Alex Kostka, pandemic-related stress has brought on mood swings, nightmares and jaw pain.

He'd been working at a Whole Foods coffee bar in New York City for only about a month before the pandemic hit, suddenly anointing him an essential worker. As deaths in the city soared, Kostka continued riding the subway to work, interacting with co-workers in the store, and working longer hours for

just a \$2-per-hour wage increase. (Months later, he'd get a \$500 bonus.) It left the 28-year-old feeling constantly unsafe and helpless.

"It was hard not to break down on the subway the minute I got on it," Kostka says.

Soon he began waking in the middle of the night with pain from clenching his jaw so tightly. Often his teeth grinding and chomping were loud enough to wake his girlfriend.

Kostka tried Talkspace, an online therapy program, but found texting about his troubles felt impersonal. By the end of the summer, he decided to start using the seven free counseling sessions offered by his employer. That's helped, he says. But as the sessions run out, he worries the symptoms might return if he's unable to find a new therapist covered by his insurance.

"Eventually, I will be able to leave this behind me, but it will take time," Kostka says. "I'm still very much a work in progress."

## How to fend off chronic stress

When it comes to chronic stress, seeing a doctor for stomach pain, headaches or skin rashes may address those physical symptoms. But the root cause is mental, medical experts say.

"We shouldn't think of this stressful situation as a negative sentence for the brain," says Harkness, the psychology professor in Ontario. "Because stress changes the brain, that means positive stuff can change the brain, too. And there is plenty we can do to help ourselves feel better in the face of adversity."

That means the solution will often involve stress-management techniques. Here are some key evidence-based techniques to try:

**Exercise.** Even low- to moderate-intensity physical activity can help counteract stress-induced inflammation in the body. It can also increase neuronal connections in the brain.

**Meditation and mindfulness.** Research shows this can lead to positive, structural and functional changes in the brain.

**Fostering social connections.** Talking to family and friends, even virtually, or staring into a pet's eyes can release a hormone that may counteract inflammation.

**Learning something new.** Whether it's a formal class or taking up a casual hobby, learning supports brain plasticity, the ability to change and adapt as a result of experience, which can be protective against depression and other mental illness.

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Aneri Pattani is a health reporter at Philadelphia Media Network, focusing on health issues among young people.

# Too Close To Home

The press release appeared in my email just like any other: a small grass fire had started on Almeda Drive in Ashland. Those living in the area should consider evacuating, it read.

I grabbed my reporter kit – a large outdoorsy waist pack holding a recorder, mic, and headphones. I live 6 miles north in Talent, which seemed far away at the time, but then the northbound winds started to pick up. I remember my husband opening the front door and looking to the sky.

"That's the most ominous thing I've ever seen in my life," he laughed nervously, pointing at a massive plume of dark-gray smoke that was spreading slowly toward us.

I've been a reporter in rural areas along the West Coast for several years now, so I'm familiar with what happens to people who don't prepare to evacuate their homes due to a wildfire. They don't get enough time to gather important documents, clothing, or pets. I've heard too many people cry as they explain how they couldn't catch their cat before their home was swallowed by flames.

That day I chose to prepare to evacuate my home with my husband and our four pets instead of chasing the fire. I wish I could say I made that decision gracefully, but actually, I huffed-and-puffed, frustrated that I had the opportunity to do on-the-ground reporting within minutes and couldn't. But therein lies the problem: I was too close.

We ended up at a friend's house in south Medford. Once my family was safely relocated, I hopped back into the car and drove to the nearest roadblock, hoping I'd get more information from law enforcement. They didn't have much – things were moving fast and even they didn't yet have a handle on what parts of Talent and Phoenix were evacuated. By that time, I could see active flames near Interstate 5 in Phoenix. Officers told me there was a temporary evacuation center at the Expo Center in Central Point, so that's where I went.

When I arrived, a couple of dozen people were sitting on lawn chairs. I learned that most of them came from the same mobile home park near Talent. Many had carpooled with each other. Some had to hitch a ride from strangers. One woman sitting alone in the shade told me she couldn't rescue her two large dogs because she didn't have a car. She was sure her house was gone. I sat with her in silence as she cried.

I'd like to say I'm an impartial journalist with no strong feelings about the things I report on, but I just can't, not with this one.

That night, like many people in the Rogue Valley, I hardly slept. I had to evacuate my friend's house in Medford and ended up sleeping on patio furniture in another friend's smoky backyard in Grants Pass. I was glued to watching Facebook videos of our neighborhood in flames, hoping to catch a glimpse of my house intact. It wasn't looking good. We didn't have high hopes.

NPR's *Morning Edition* asked if they could interview me on air, which I did at 2:30 in the morning. Their producer called me shortly after.

"You sounded upset," he said. "Are you ok?"

I'd like to say I'm an impartial journalist with no strong feelings about the things I report on, but I just can't, not with this one. I'm upset that I never got an evacuation alert from the county, even though almost everything across the street from my house was destroyed by the fire. I'm angry that there wasn't a plan for helping people evacuate when they don't have a car. I'm heartbroken that so many of my neighbors never got to return home, and I'm not sure when I'll see them again.

Unlike my past experiences reporting on wildfire, I don't get to leave the destruction behind me in some other distant community. Every day I have to drive past piles of ash and debris to get to my house. But at least I have this: the opportunity to watch my neighbors come together and rebuild. Just a few weeks after the fire, people are already coming up with innovative ways to build affordable housing and redesign our towns in a way that reflects the people who live here. I'm confident that with time, Talent and Phoenix will come out stronger, and more resilient than ever, and I look forward to being part of that process, both as a reporter and as a member of our community.



April Ehrlich began freelancing for Jefferson Public Radio in 2016. She officially joined the team as *Morning Edition* host and a *Jefferson Exchange* producer in August 2017.



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# Rising From The Ashes

A few months back, I wrote about how we were living through history, and boy have we lived through some history since I typed those words. The past few months have challenged us as individuals, communities, and a nation in a way most could never have foretold. While the COVID-19 pandemic has kept us apart (at least physically), the recent wildfires that have devastated our communities have served to remind us about all of the ways we are tied together. We talked with George Kramer of Preserving Oregon and Kuri Gill of Oregon Heritage during our September radio-edition of *Underground History*. Both spoke of the cultural resources that were impacted by the recent fires across the state and the role of heritage in rebuilding and recovery.

The Almeda Fire burned Hanscom Hall, Talent's first building listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The 100-year-old building has served the community as post office, restaurant, pottery shop, and as temporary city offices after an earlier fire. The circa 1925 Malmgren Seed Company building and the Phoenix Hotel are among other local landmarks lost. The Bolan Mountain Lookout was burned in the Slater Fire. This "house of glass" was constructed in 1953 to replace the original structure and was one of the last L-4-style lookouts remaining. While it will take time to assess the countless other cultural resources impacted by the fires across the state, there was good news, too. Locally, the Talent Historical Society and the Rogue Valley Genealogical Society—both important repositories of historical documents and data—survived.

A recent E-Digest produced by the Oregon Historical Society compiled links from the Oregon Encyclopedia of History and Culture as there are several entries on the historical communities recently impacted by fires. Head over to [oregonencyclopedia.org](http://oregonencyclopedia.org) to read about the history and resiliency of communities such as Talent, Detroit, Blue River, and Vida. The city of Detroit began as a railroad camp and relocated in 1952 for the construction Detroit Lake reservoir. Much of this community was lost to the Beachie Creek and Lionshead Fires. The Holiday Farm Fire hit the early mining community of Blue River as well as Vida (formerly Gate Creek), which served as an important link along the McKenzie River.

While the loss of old buildings is easy to quantify, the loss of intangible heritage will take longer to recognize. Communities are more than just houses and infrastructure:

Continued on page 45



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Another loss in Talent, Oregon. The Malmgren Seed Company building built c1925 or so, on what was then the Pacific Highway. It was later a lumber yard. In more recent years it was Southern Oregon Clay, supporting the local art community and later became a gallery. Gone.



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# Underground History

Continued from page 43

we lost whole neighborhoods, clusters of businesses, and the look and feel of familiar streets. In order to rebuild vibrant healthy communities, all of the stakeholders need to be recognized and involved. And heritage organizations can help!

The Oregon Heritage office of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department has been hard at work crafting tools to help organizations and communities with disaster preparedness long before 2020 hit. Thankfully, many of these resources are now ready and available for use. Information provided below will take you to the State Disaster Preparedness, Recovery & Resilience Plan, help you reach out to the National Heritage Responders who are standing by to consult on collections assessment and treatment, and there is even a link to information about saving family heirlooms or objects that have been damaged in a fire. Local historical societies are also a great resource and can help provide historical photos and maps that can be consulted as part of planning and rebuilding efforts. For some residents they might also have information about family history or dates and construction details of buildings lost.

The grass roots relief efforts and donations of food and supplies to fire victims has been inspiring, and hopefully will continue to support displaced residents as they work to reestablish themselves. While addressing the immediate needs of food and shelter are critical, as the dust settles more nuanced decisions will be made. While buildings can be replaced, there is no reset to September 7th. Residents will move, businesses might not recover, and the affordable housing that drew many to the area may not be replaced. What do we work to keep and restore? What can we make better? While the scale of recent fires is exceptional, fires have punctuated the history of many Oregon and California towns. I think we are all feeling the fatigue of living through such a complex historical moment. While 2020 has provided much to grieve over, we are also in a unique position of power. We can't go back, so onwards and upwards. The future of our communities is in our hands.



Chelsea Rose is an archaeologist with the Southern Oregon University Laboratory of Anthropology (SOULA) and co-host of Underground History, a monthly segment that airs during the Jefferson Exchange on JPR's News & Information service.



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Southern Oregon had a difficult night, with lots of loss, including Hanscom Hall, Talent's first NR-listed building. Formerly the post office, a restaurant, a pottery shop and even, for a time, city offices after a fire, it was 110-years old.

**The Oregon State Disaster Preparedness, Recovery & Resilience Plan can be found here:**

<https://www.oregon.gov/oprd/OH/Pages/DisasterPrep.aspx>

The number for National Heritage Responders to help with collections assessment and treatment: 202-661-8068

Follow this link for helpful information about saving family heirlooms after a fire:

<https://cool.culturalheritage.org/byorg/hp/PROGRAMS/TFsoot.HTM>

## POETRY

NAN FORSBERG HAMMONS

### Goose Lake

Seven hours easy drive  
south and east into central Oregon,  
the lake sprawls dull zinc,  
drought-diminished and shallow.

We set up camp, house-mouse around  
making a nest, while chartreuse  
melts to lavender and the altitude  
makes us aware of our breath.

Spring is locked up in fists of cold, so  
we pile pinewood on the fire.  
In a meadow fringed with budding willow  
I see deer shy as swan,  
their great ears carve tunnels into the gloaming,  
listening as they fold down onto the earth.  
One doe tucks her head like a child,  
trusting the one who stands  
guard.

Next day we bird around the lake,  
see ibis, crane, phalarope, tern, eagle,  
mountain bluebird as blue as a propane flame.

No lunch at Fandango Pass this spring.  
The Warner mountain snow fields  
catch the weather and hold it,  
heaped in their hair, the road  
too dangerous for travel.

When we come home, familiar sand dunes  
race by the truck like blond ponies.  
The sea throbs beyond  
and the fan of high desert memory folds.

### In Memoriam for James

I wake early,  
drink tea,  
gauge the day from  
the long, unfamiliar window  
which looks west  
to the silky Pacific.

This small wooden  
cottage  
four blocks from the bay  
is new to me.

I'm still standing  
stunned  
by loss.

The cacophony of death,  
home sold, cats left behind,  
clatters in my heart  
like a jangle of metal  
coat hangers,  
all angles  
and empty spaces.

---

Nan Forsberg Hammons's poetry has appeared in *Fireweed*, *The Beacon*, *Arcadia*, the *World* newspaper, Seattle's *Beacon Review*, *Artscape*, *Potpourri*, and *KSOR Guide to the Arts*, and she has done numerous readings up and down the Oregon coast. Her other true love is painting. After living in the Oregon Bay area most of her life, she has moved to Portland. She misses the trees.

Writers may submit original poetry for publication in *Jefferson Journal*.

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